



NATIONAL INCIDENT COORDINATION TEAM

How EPA Coordinates Response in a Catastrophic Disaster

FACTSHEET

WHAT IS THE NICT?

Within the federal government, numerous plans, activities, programs, and groups are responsible for preparedness and/or response activities for large-scale disasters at the national or international level. These include the National Contingency Plan, the Federal Response Plan, the Mass Immigration Emergency Plan, and the Federal Radiological Emergency Response Plan. EPA's National Incident Coordination Team (NICT), established at the request of the Administrator, focuses and coordinates the Agency's operations carried out according to these plans. The NICT does not replace any existing emergency response organization, procedures, or functions. Rather, it serves as a focal point for multi-program coordination during major disasters. At the regional level, there is a NICT equivalent organization called the Regional Incident Coordination Team (RICT).

The NICT was first activated in response to the EXXON Valdez oil spill in 1989. Earlier disasters such as the 1984 chemical accident in Bhopal, India, made it clear that the Agency needed to coordinate its technical, policy, pro-

gram, and communications expertise during hectic response activity. Since 1989, the NICT has taken action after such disasters as Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the 1993 Midwest floods, the 1994 Northridge earthquake in California, and Hurricane Marilyn in the US Virgin Islands in 1995.

WHO ARE THE NICT MEMBERS

The NICT is chaired by the Agency's Emergency Coordinator, who is the Director of EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office, within the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER). The NICT consists of one senior-level representative from each EPA office at headquarters. NICT members represent their respective Assistant or Regional Administrator; they have a thorough understanding of the technical, program, communications, and policy issues relevant to their program offices; and they have the authority to commit their office's resources and assist in the Agency's response to a major incident.

While activated, the team conducts much of its work in the headquarters Emergency Operations Center.

NICT's RESPONSIBILITIES

When the NICT is activated during a major incident, it serves as a focal point for overall coordination of EPA's response activity and supports regional response personnel. It also serves as an official channel for the flow of information between EPA headquarters and the Regional Incident Coordination Team in the affected region. In addition, it keeps the Administrator apprised about ongoing response and coordination activities and provides a forum for identifying and resolving cross-cutting, multi-program issues. During a major incident, the Administrator, the White House, Congress, other federal and state agencies, foreign governments, and the media need critical information. The NICT ensures accuracy, consistency, and timeliness of this information.

ACTIVATING THE NICT

Usually the NICT is activated by the Agency's Emergency Coordinator in consultation with the Administrator, a Deputy Assistant Administrator, or the Assistant Administrator for OSWER. Each of these individuals has the authority to acti-

vate the NICT. This may be in the event of an oil discharge or a hazardous substance release that crosses regional boundaries or that overwhelms the response capability of the region(s). The NICT could also be activated if there is a significant threat to population or potential large-scale damage to property or natural resources. Events concerning certain significant national or international policy issues could trigger a NICT activation, and attention from Congress, the public, or the media concerning an incident could also prompt EPA to call the NICT into action.

KEY TO EFFECTIVENESS

Critical to the NICT's effectiveness is its ability to draw on the cooperation and abilities of Agency personnel at all levels. EPA, through the NICT, is uniquely able to assemble extensive and impressive resources for successful response and communication during a national emergency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

CONTACT THE EMERGENCY PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY RIGHT-TO-KNOW HOTLINE

(800) 424-9346 OR (703) 412-9810

TDD (800) 535-7672

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 9 AM TO 6 PM, EASTERN TIME

